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Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-first session

26 February-9 March 2007

Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

Statement submitted by International Council of Jewish Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

We, the NGO's, below, reaffirm the Beijing Platform of Action where girls won their place on the agenda in Section L. There, governments promised to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl-child by addressing harmful cultural attitudes and practices, and to promote active participation for girls in their own life decisions. The inclusion of Section L acknowledged that women's advancement would not be sustainable without attention to the rights and dignity of the girl-child.

The theme for CSW51 - The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl-child - is a reminder to governments and civil society of promises made that the safety and protection of the girl-child will be preserved.

Media, advertisements, and popular culture worldwide promote perfect beauty during a time of intense emotional and physical change for the girl-child. It has been shown that girls, even as young as six, are aware of these messages. These stereotypes can create anxiety, lack of self-esteem and loss of confidence, and surely impede development of a healthy self-image. They have been shown to contribute to the rapid increase in dieting and eating disorders. The problem is widespread across the globe, but due to cultural differences, it is not publicly acknowledged.

Girls should be celebrated for who they are and not how they look. These images and standards of beauty contradict good health practices and contribute to negative feelings about physical appearance. The still-malleable girl-child is defining herself and her self-worth by false standards. In too many countries, girls withdraw from normal activities of life because they are troubled about the appearance of their bodies.

The next generation of girl-children must grow up without the pressure and consequences of having to live up to unrealistic and unhealthy beauty ideals. We therefore urge governments and civil society to:

- Initiate grass-roots programs that will help individual girls form a healthy self-image: talk to girls early in life about real beauty; support healthy eating; link women's organizations with schools, youth groups, and community centers to promote discussions on role models, if they are real, and why; educate to achieve independent thinking and a critical view of the media and their messages;
- Encourage schools to develop workshops and mentoring programs for girls to help foster a healthy relationship with their bodies; select role models to surround them with alternative values; connect business with educational institutions to focus on popular culture and the effect it has on the girl child;
- Educate parents on the importance of reinforcing their daughters' confidence;
- Enable girls to be their own advocates for change; to actively plan and run programs for changing images; help girls to build self confidence and develop leadership skills;

- Encourage commercial media interests to promote "real beauty" among "real girls" to prove that beauty comes in different shapes, sizes, and looks; marketing and outreach should portray real and authentic women who don't fit into specific beauty stereotypes;
- Encourage commercial interests to create women's forums to participate in a dialogue and debate about the definition and standards of beauty in society;
- Develop realistic standards for media, advertising and the communication industries.

Just as the struggle for women's rights began with massive consciousness-raising, the issue of self-image must become a topic of public debate. Let us help the girl child stop chasing a mirage and return to a healthy reality.

Note:

Statement endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Anglican Consultative Council, Armenian International Women's Association, Associated Country Women of the World, Gray Panthers, Hadassah — Women's Zionist Organization of America, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation on Ageing, International Health Awareness Network, International Immigrants Foundation, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, Perhaps Kids Meeting Kids Can Make a Difference, Soroptimist International and World ORT Union, and by Women's American ORT, a non-governmental organization



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Statement submitted by Soroptimist International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Statement

Soroptimist International believes that the world's children are entitled to special care and assistance. In recognising the rights of the child as paramount, Soroptimist International has particular concern for the rights of the girl child and fully supports the strategic objectives and actions relative to the Girl Child in the Beijing Platform for Action and in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Soroptimist International condemns all forms of violence against girls, particularly sexual violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking, and harmful traditional practices.

Girls are often victims because of the -

- Pressures to engage in sexual activity
- Lack of protective laws or failure to enforce them
- Discrimination from the earliest stages of their lives
- Forced early marriage or sexual activity for profit
- Negative portrayals in the media
- Exploitative labour

Whilst Soroptimist International believes that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is correct in emphasising the responsibilities of parents, guardians and the community to provide direction and guidance to girls to exercise their rights, it believes that governments must -

- Ratify and implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Fulfil their commitment to International Conventions, treaties and agreements relative to the girl child by developing and implementing laws that guarantee girls protection from abuse, violence, exploitation, and neglect
- Take measures to ensure that all girl children are registered immediately after birth
- Ensure equal access for girls to primary, secondary and higher education including vocational and technical education
- Forbid exploitative child labour
- Provide educational programmes to help prevent early marriages and teenage pregnancies
- Provide support services for teenage mothers to learn parenting skills and to continue their education and training
- Strengthen the role of the family and improve the status of the girl child within the family
- Eliminate barriers which prevent girls developing to their full potential
- Ensure that the girl child is not exploited in the media
- Ensure that the aggregation of statistical information is gender related

Soroptimist International pledges its members to work for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against the girl child, including harmful attitudes and traditional practices, which define her gender as second class within the family and in society.

Soroptimist International believes that education of the girl child is the key to progress and will work in partnerships locally and internationally to realise this aim.



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Statement submitted by International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Council of Women, International Federation of University Women, Soroptimist International and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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Statement

The member organizations of Project Five-O: International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Council of Women, International Federation of University Women, Soroptimist International and Zonta International, each in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, are committed to working for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child, the priority theme for this fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Each of our organizations carries out programs and advocacy for the advancement of the status of women and girls worldwide. In addition, for more than twenty-five years our organizations have partnered together as Project Five-O to provide economic opportunities, education and training for thousands of local women of all ages in developing countries and countries in transition. Programs funded through Project Five-O offer opportunities for women to acquire skills and income that often broaden their role in the family and community as well as enhance the well-being of their family. As recognized in the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on Children in 2002, the achievement of development goals for children, particularly girls, is contingent on women's empowerment.

Moreover, the equal rights of girls and equal participation of women in the social, cultural, economic and political life of societies is an acknowledged prerequisite of the international community for successful and sustainable development. Standing in the way of achieving those goals is discrimination and violence that begin for girls at the earliest stages of life and continue throughout their lives.

Gender inequality must to be universally acknowledged as socially constructed and perpetuated by cultural, economic and social practices that promote patriarchal dominance. Women and men, girls and boys, must work together in all public and private aspects of society to remove barriers to the actualization of gender parity and abolish gender-stereotyping. States must take an active role using legislation and legal decisions to end all discrimination. Despite the existence of an international framework for the protection of the girl child, girls in many countries are deprived of life through female infanticide, prenatal sex selection and sex selective abortion. Girls are frequently neglected and are denied their basic rights to food, clean water, education and health care. Female genital mutilation and early marriage contribute to life-long health problems. Violence against girls has also made them more vulnerable to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and gender inequality has contributed to the lack of essential information, education and health services needed to address this serious problem. It is imperative that the needs of girls including preventive tools and legal protection become a priority of States in their battle against HIV/AIDS.

Girls are more vulnerable to domestic violence, violence in schools and commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking. As many as 150 million girls are raped or subjected to sexual violence each year, usually by someone in their family circle. States must close the gap between international standards and national laws, policies and practices. A comprehensive range of actions that include not only legislation and its enforcement but the provision of child-friendly policies and services, focused on girls, and sensitivity training and awareness are essential if public officials are to act as strong advocates for girls. The collection of age-disaggregated data on the range of issues affecting the girl

child is urged to aid in the formulation of more directed programs. The establishment of targets and timetables as well as the direction of adequate resources to initiatives is critical to the success of girl-friendly programs.

Armed conflicts also increases girls' exposure to sexual violence including rape, torture, forced pregnancy, forced prostitution and trafficking. Members of Project Five-O urge Member States to strengthen their commitment to the implementation of Security Council Resolution #1325 as means of providing special attention to the needs of girls in demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programs.

Domestic work, which often takes the form of unregulated employment and exploitation, is the largest employment category for girls under sixteen years of age, and is often associated with physical, sexual and psychological violence.

Moreover, one million children, both girls and boys, who are coerced, kidnapped, deceived and sold, enter into prostitution, child pornography and similar activities every year.

The empowerment of the girl child herself is central to preventing and eliminating gender-based violence and promoting gender equality through equal participation in decision-making. Access to education at all levels and the development of girl-friendly school environments which are safe, accessible, offer adequate sanitary facilities and include non-gendered curricula and the opportunity for girls to participate equally with boys would strengthen the capacity of girls to build self-esteem and become leaders. Schools that offer flexible hours so girls can complete their work at home, that offer meals as an incentive for poorer families and that have waived costly uniform requirements have had good success in increasing girls' education.

Access to health information and services, including reproductive information and services, must also be extended as an important condition for advancing gender equality between girls and boys and in the family.

Project Five-O organizations urge Member States to renew their commitment to internationally agreed development agreements, such as the Millennium Development Goals, where critical issues for girls are included. National policy development plans, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and MDG national reports should add more focus on the girl child. The inclusion of child-focused budgets, especially targeting a girls' rights perspective, would be a tremendous initiative toward fostering the elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

Civil society organizations, particularly non-governmental organizations, have been working with varying degrees of success to promote girls' rights and end violence worldwide through service programs and advocacy efforts. While this encourages us to strive harder, much work remains to be done. Creating dynamic partnerships between Member States and NGOs to further advance issues of gender equality and ending violence, will ensure a sustainable success and strengthen our accomplishments.



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Statement submitted by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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Statement

Promises made

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantee girls the right to education. In 1990 governments meeting in Jomtien, promised Education for All and gender equality in education by 2015, a commitment reaffirmed with particular emphasis on girls' education, by the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action. Those promises were repeated in the Millennium Declaration when world leaders agreed to end gender disparity in education and to empower women.

In the Beijing Declaration, governments meeting at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women recommitted themselves to ensuring the full implementation of the human rights of women and girls including equal access and treatment in education.ⁱ In Section L of the Beijing Platform for Action they promised to end discrimination against the girl child—to ensure universal and equal access to education for all girls by allocating appropriate budgetary resources, by enlisting the support of the community; and by developing training programmes and materials for teachers and educators, with a view to providing them with effective strategies for gender-sensitive teaching.ⁱⁱ

Despite guarantees enshrined in international law and the oft-repeated commitment to education for all, girls continue to be denied the full enjoyment of their right to education. Notwithstanding international consensus on the importance of improving gender parity and equality in education, sex discrimination in education remains a persistent problem. Recent progress is far too slow to achieve full gender parity and equality by 2015.

Progress slow

While many countries have made significant progress in education, girls still account for 57% of the 77 million out-of-school children world-wide.ⁱⁱⁱ Of countries with 2004 data available, only about two-thirds have achieved gender parity at the primary level. Only one-third of countries reporting on secondary education have achieved parity and only five countries for which data are available have achieved parity at the tertiary level.^{iv}

Girls continue to be locked out of school and locked into inequality. Barriers to quality education include poverty, child labour, child trafficking, HIV/AIDS, remote location, inadequate infrastructure, mother's lack of education, civil conflict, discrimination, and violence.

Furthermore, the poor-quality education, resulting from irrelevant and obsolete curricula, overcrowded classrooms, unsafe schools, untrained teachers, and gender discrimination, cause high

dropout and repetition rates among girls.^v When girls are left behind not only are their rights violated, but the cascading benefits of girls' education are lost.

Girls' education matters

Over the course of the last decade academics, development practitioners, girls' advocates, and government ministers have pointed to the important benefits of girls' education. Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan repeatedly addressed its significance.

If we are to succeed in our efforts to build a healthier, more peaceful and equitable world, classrooms must be full of girls as well as boys. By educating girls, we will help raise economic productivity and reduce both maternal and infant mortality. By educating girls, we will improve nutrition, promote health, and fight HIV/AIDS. By educating girls, we will trigger a transformation of society as a whole—social, economic, and political.^{vi}

Research has shown:

- Education expands a girl's options and offers her resources for development;^{vii}
- While education for both boys and girls leads to increased income for individuals and nations, the education of girls leads to greater gains;
- Educated women have smaller, healthier, and better educated families;
- Educated girls are less likely to fall victim to HIV/AIDS, trafficking, early marriage, and various other forms of violence;
- Increased education is one of the most important tools to empower girls within the family and society. As that happens, they not only increase their own agency but improve the well-being of their families and help to transform their communities.^{viii}

Quality matters

However, research shows that providing access to education is insufficient. Girls must have access to quality education that not only promotes understanding, tolerance, and respect for human rights, but also develops knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for girls to participate effectively in society.

While no single model is appropriate for all, and education must always fit local and national contexts, research has uncovered elements which help to ensure quality education that promotes gender equality. These include:

- Teachers, especially female, with proper and continuous training, who encourage active, participatory learning by all students;^{ix}

- Curriculum and materials relevant to national and local needs, grounded in students' own culture, and free of gender bias and stereotypes;
- Local control of education in which parents—mothers and fathers—are given an explicit role in holding schools and teachers accountable for delivering results;^x
- Flexible instruction modes, including alternative delivery formats, classroom hours, and content, so as to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable girls;^{xi}
- Transparent school management that is accountable to stakeholders and constituents and capable of monitoring and evaluating school performance and girls' achievement;^{xii}
- Dependable educational funding that ensures adequate education infrastructure, materials, and personnel and specifically targets girls.^{xiii}

Recommendations

Rapid progress toward ending discrimination and achieving equality in education can be made if governments and their citizens will:

1. Improve quality by undertaking the systemic reform of education including:
 - Creating rights-based, gender-sensitive curricula, infrastructure, and pedagogy;
 - Ensuring that girls are safe from all forms of violence and intimidation in all educational settings.
2. Mobilize the political will necessary to ensure quality education for all girls:
 - Create a national and international ethos that identifies the importance and value of educating girls;
 - Make the education of girls a priority; recognizing girls' right to education and the key role it plays in the accomplishment of all the promises of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Millennium Development Goals.
3. Develop comprehensive national education strategies that:
 - Target the special needs of girls, especially disadvantaged and vulnerable girls;
 - Prioritize girls' education in all development plans and poverty reduction strategies.
4. Mobilize national and international resources for girls' education.
 - Encourage developing nations to increase national funding for basic education and to specifically target education for girls, especially disadvantaged and vulnerable girls.
 - Insist that donor nations demonstrate their political and financial commitment to education for girls by canceling the onerous debt of impoverished countries and increasing donor aid for girls' education.
 - Support the efforts of non-governmental organizations' to:

- Educate civil society about the importance of girls' education;
- Eliminate cultural taboos and traditional practices that keep girls from exercising their right to education;
- Develop creative formal and non-formal education programs to meet the needs of girls, especially those most marginalized.

Conclusions

Governments are responsible for the goals they have set for girls' education. Non-Governmental Organizations have long been a force in promoting and delivering education, especially to those most vulnerable and neglected. They must continue to work with national governments, local communities, and UN agencies to build educational capacity. Finally, it is the responsibility of women, men, girls and boys, everywhere to mobilize political will to meet the commitments made to ensure gender equality in education.

"My dream is to become a doctor. But dreams remain dreams. I am in class five and have to leave now. School is only free up to this year. I think my father will marry me off in the near future because I'll be finished with school and have little to do. This thought frightens me. I hope someone hears my cry and comes forward before my education is stopped." Jasmine, 13, from Bangladesh^{xiv}

Note:

Statement endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Armenian Relief Society, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Congregations of St. Joseph, Dominican Leadership Conference, Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, FEMVISION, Fraternité Notre Dame, Grail, International Council of Jewish Women, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, League of Women Voters of the United States, Loretto Community, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, SOS Kinderdorf International, UNANIMA International, United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society, United Church of Christ Board for World Ministries, Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, World Movement of Mothers and Zonta International.

ⁱ Beijing Declaration, 27, 30.

ⁱⁱ Platform for Action, 279.

ⁱⁱⁱ EFA Global Monitoring Team, Education for All: Strong Foundation Early Childhood Care and Education 2007, (Paris: UNESCO) 29.

- iv EFA 2007, 4.
- v UNESCO, <http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/>
- vi Secretary-General, Gender Parity in Education (Washington, DC, 2 March 2005).
- vii Eileen Kane, Girls' Education in Africa: What Do We Know About Strategies that Work, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004), 2.
- viii Barbara Herz and Gene B. Sperling, What Works in Girls' Education: Executive Summary (NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2004), 3-6.
- ix Teach a Child Transform A Nation (Washington, DC: The Basic Education Coalition, 2004), 3.
- x The UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, Toward Universal Primary Education (NY: UN Millennium Project, 2005), 77.
- xi Teach a Child, 3.
- xii Ibid.
- xiii Ibid.
- xiv UNICEF, Voices of Youth.



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Statement submitted by Femvision, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

We, the NGO's below, reaffirm the Beijing Platform of Action within which framework governments committed to the nine strategic objectives contained in Section L, pertaining to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against the girl-child. Section L addresses the need to increase the girl-child's awareness of her needs and potential, providing her with equal opportunities in education, skills development and training. It also underlines the importance of promoting the girl-child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life to ensure that women's advancement is sustainable.

The theme for the 51st Session of the CSW, "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl-child", must remind governments and civil society not only of the need to protect the girl child, but of the need to provide her with the tools to create and preserve her own well-being and safety.

The Secretary General's report on Violence against Women describes the many forms of discrimination against women and girls and the kinds of violence they lead to. The dependency, vulnerability and despair that result from restricted access to their own economic independence and livelihoods is one of the most widespread forms of discrimination against women and prevents them from taking an active part in the economic, social and political life of their communities.

When women know that they can be economically independent and how to achieve this, they are capable of removing themselves and others from situations of discrimination, violence and vulnerability to suffering and illness. They have repeatedly shown their ability and willingness to act as agents for change within their communities. It is vital to break traditional patterns of repression by giving girls access to knowledge and training to empower them to use their intelligence, capacity and skills to create economic independence for themselves and for others.

It is not enough to empower girls to be employees; they must also be empowered to be caring entrepreneurs who can bring sustainable practices, wealth and wellbeing to their communities.

In many environments, there are too few female role models to provide the inspiration needed to empower girls to attain economic independence. It is therefore the responsibility of governments and civil society to provide the training and mentoring necessary to lead to the economic empowerment of the girl-child and thus provide her with the tools to create her own security.

We therefore urge governments and civil society to:

- Initiate grass-roots programmes that will give girls an understanding of the freedom of choice that economic independence can give them and the responsibilities that it carries both in social and environmental terms; demystify the financial world: banks, credit, financial services etc and how to gain access to those services; teach basic accounting and money management skills; from an early age talk to girls about the existence of options that may not be visible in their direct environment but are nonetheless honourable and valid;
- Empower girls to be agents for change; help them develop an awareness of their values and natural instincts as women and to trust in their capacity as decision-makers; show them they can create employment and benefit for others; develop leadership skills;
- Educate girls and boys in critical thinking around their own environment and images from abroad; create discussion groups with local youth clubs and community centres to promote debate, ideas and provide advice; look for local female role models and women's organisations to demonstrate women's values at work, provide mentors and help create a critical consciousness;

- Encourage schools and teachers to educate boys together with girls on the importance of equal economic rights and the freedom that decision-making power can give to all citizens; teach the links between trade on a local level with national and global economics to give girls and boys a picture of how and why economic systems function and how economic activity effects the social and natural environment; select male and female national and international role models to surround them with alternative values and perspectives;
- Educate parents on the importance of providing their daughter with the tools to create her own safety and that of her family and community; work in conjunction with grassroots and community groups to talk to mothers about the need to give their daughters alternatives, reassuring them that economic independence can mean the survival rather than the death of tradition in today's globalised world;
- Encourage businesses to invest in girls' education; reinforce the image of the girl-child as the task force of the future- a fast-learning, capable, flexible and creative prospective employee. Connect business with educational institutions to provide direct contact and create internships and work experience opportunities;
- Encourage international business associations and women's organisations to run workshops and seminars on small business to help girls learn how to actively plan and run small business projects from beginning to end. Help girls to see the wide range of possibilities, beyond basic artisan production to using their traditional unpaid skills as carers and providers as a platform for creating a service business.

Economic empowerment leads to participation not only in economic but also in social and political life. It provides influence and decision-making power that guarantees voice. If we fail to empower girls to be free, responsible economic actors, we are not preparing a future generation of women ready to take up positions of economic and political leadership as full equals with men. The alternative perspective that women offer will continue to go unheard and the world will be a much poorer place. It is our responsibility to ensure this does not happen.

Note:

Statement endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations: Action aides aux familles démunies, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council of Women, World Organization for Early Childhood Education and Zonta International



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Statement submitted by Mother's Union, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

The Mothers' Union (MU) is an Anglican organisation promoting the well being of families worldwide. Its 3.6 million members in 77 countries are engaged in grassroots initiatives empowering women, families and communities. Our members' experiences and understanding of the situation of girls throughout the world form the basis of this response.

Overview of discrimination and violence against the girl child

Gender roles reflect the long-standing assumptions that a society holds about men, women, boys and girls. These roles may differ from place to place and they may change over time, but they continue to affect all aspects of life ranging from access to resources, public and private responsibilities, and patterns of courtship.

Too often, these socially-constructed roles lead to discrimination against girls on the basis of their gender from the moment they are born, and, in cases such as female foeticide, whilst still in the womb. Many MU members identified unequal social values attached to the birth of girls compared with boys as evidence of such discrimination: 'It begins when they are born. Boys get given 5 ululations and girls only 3. This creates a big gap. Superiority and inferiority are thus created.' (MU Member, Kenya)

The unequal treatment of girls and boys does not stop there but continues throughout childhood and into adulthood. It permeates all sectors of society, be they social, economic or political, and hinders girls' participation in society. The Beijing Platform for Action recognised this fact: 'Girls often have less access to nutrition, physical and mental health care, and education and enjoy fewer rights, opportunities, and benefits of childhood and adolescence than boys.'

Such discrimination lies at the heart of the girl child's greater vulnerability to violence, because violence against her reinforces gender hierarchies. Although all violence against all children is a violation of human rights, gender-based violence requires specific attention to ensure that the girl child is protected.

Situations where discrimination and violence against the girl child occur

Gender-based discrimination and violence occur in both the public and private spheres, transcending the boundaries of nation, culture, race and religion. MU members noted several sectors of society where gender-based discrimination occurs:

In the family

Many MU members pointed out that gender roles are learnt first in the family. Indeed, the Mothers' Union has long stated that 'equality between men and women...begins in the family.' Although it is impossible to disconnect gender discrimination in the family from that reflected in all other contexts, the family is a specific forum for gender-based discrimination that is particularly hard

to challenge. This is because certain social norms and cultures can protect privacy and male domination within the family at the expense of girls and women, and are or can be perpetuated by women.

The most frequent manifestation of discrimination that MU members cited was the unequal division of domestic work. They recognised how this can thwart a girl's potential, particularly in terms of education: 'Even if a girl goes to school just as boys do, she will come back home and do all the domestic work, like fetching water, cooking, washing plates, sweeping the home, while the boy is doing his homework, and afterwards he will sit and wait for food to be brought to him by the girl.' (MU Member, Uganda)

Members noted that pressures on a family's finances, through school fees and hidden costs for school equipment, can exacerbate preferences for boys' education over girls. However, it was not only in poorer countries where a difference in gender roles in the home manifested itself: 'I have to tidy my bedroom and go shopping with my Mum, but my brother hardly ever goes shopping unless it is to get something for himself and Mum tidies his bedroom for him.' (Girl child, 11 years, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Other types of social, cultural and economic discrimination or violence that MU members stated as being perpetuated by families included:

- lack of inheritance rights
- sexual and physical abuse
- female genital mutilation (FGM)
- lack of education about sex and puberty
- early/forced marriage
- lack of decision-making power
- girls' nutritional or health needs being less important than boys'

At school

Not only does gender-based discrimination prevent girls from attending and remaining at school, it also hinders girls' full participation at school. One MU member from Nigeria recalled one of her experiences as a child: 'When I was in primary school, my teacher (male) said I couldn't be the class leader because I was a girl. He noted that I was not supposed to lead the boys in my class.' Several MU members remarked how education syllabi can stereotype gender roles and how girls can be pushed to study subjects perceived to be 'female' as opposed to ones perceived as 'male'. In addition, school is an environment where discrimination and violence against girls can be perpetrated by their peers - be they boys or girls.

In the community

One common worry among MU members was the safety of girls as they move from place to place in their communities. One girl in the United Kingdom testified; 'everyday when I walk to school, older men in vans, lorries and cars shout rude comments at me.' Several members cited cases where such threatening behaviour had turned into actual physical and sexual harm of girls.

Other members noted that certain interpretations of girls' roles may exclude them from equal and active participation in community life: 'Girls don't participate in meetings or games or sports, because according to culture a well-educated girl is the one who stays at home.' (MU members, Rwanda) Many rued the lack of female role models in leadership positions as a means for combating such beliefs, be that in religious, political or employment spheres. And the media was held up as having a major responsibility for the promotion of a positive image of girls, and indeed women. MU Members felt that current media culture puts excessive emphasis on physical appearance, which leads to girls' low-self esteem and the objectifying of girls and women.

However, the most commonly cited challenges facing girls in their communities were those of multiple social-exclusion. This means that discrimination is not only based on gender but also on colour, race, religion, politics, ethnic origin or disability. Such girls are more vulnerable to discrimination and violence because their gender exaggerates the fact that they are already less likely to access quality and relevant education and more likely to be trafficked, exposed to hazardous work and sexual exploitation. The same is true for girls facing poverty, conflict, social instability and preventable diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

How to eliminate discrimination and violence against the girl child

The Mothers' Union is committed to eliminating discrimination and violence against the girl child through its members' own work in their communities and through lobbying governments. To this end, the Mothers' Union promotes four principles for governments, NGOs and individuals alike:

An holistic approach

As well as developing specific strategies to address the unequal power relations leading to girls' greater vulnerability to discrimination and violence, gender equality must be seen as a central part of all social transformation efforts. Unless poverty eradication policies, for example, also address the inequality of gender roles, success will be slow and uneven – both in terms of gender equality and in terms of poverty eradication.

An empowering approach

Education is the principle tool for the elimination of discrimination and violence against girls. Education here not only means the formal education of girls, but also the education of society at large, including parents. MU members noted that little awareness about gender issues among girls and women themselves is particularly disempowering: 'The main problem is that they (women) do not feel equal because they have had it hammered into them for hundreds of years.' (MU member, United Kingdom)

An inclusive approach

The Mothers' Union has long advocated that gender equality is not just about women; it is about women and men, and can only be achieved with the partnership of men. However, in the context of

the girl child, many MU members pointed out that it is not just men who must join the fight against gender discrimination, but other women as well. Many felt that women can stand in the way of the advancement of girls and demanded that 'women should stop being enemies of their fellow women'. (MU Member, Kenya)

A partnership approach

Many MU members praised the positive impact that new laws had had on the situation of girls in their communities; free primary education, equal opportunities legislation and punishment for sex offenders. Yet, although some governments still have a long way to go in terms of legislation and enforcement, governments alone cannot eliminate discrimination and violence. They must work with NGOs, faith groups, civil society and also the private sector. This is the only way that cultural and traditional practices which are perpetuating discrimination and violence against girls can be challenged and overcome.



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Statement submitted by Baha'i International Community, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

Transforming Values to Empower the Girl Child

The Bahá'í International Community welcomes the consideration of "the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child" as the priority theme of the 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

We also welcome the Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Children, which we hope will bring attention to this critical issue and facilitate strategizing at all levels of society.

The Bahá'í International Community believes that the era of developing legal frameworks to eradicate violence against girls must now be followed by an emphasis on implementation and prevention. The challenge before the international community is how to create the social, material and structural conditions in which women and girls can develop their full potential. The creation of such conditions must not be limited to legal and institutional reforms; rather, deep-rooted changes are needed to create a culture in which justice and equality prevail over the impetuosity of authoritarian power and physical force. Education and training must be carried out in a way that enables children to grow intellectually and morally, cultivating in them a sense of dignity as well as responsibility for the well-being of their family, their community and the world.

We would like to offer the following recommendations:

- With the understanding that a girl child's most influential environment is her family, national and international interventions, policies and programs should promote values and attitudes that support families and enable women and men to work together as equal partners in all fields of human endeavor.
- Educational institutions should develop and incorporate moral development into their curricula. Through such curricula, Bahá'í schools, for example, seek to develop the individual as a whole – integrating the spiritual and the material, the theoretical and the practical and the sense of individual progress with service to the common good. Gender sensitization should also form an integral part of a child's education, with a view to stemming the perpetuation of discrimination and stereotypical gender roles.
- Consultative mechanisms for coordination, implementation and monitoring at the national level are needed to reinforce the understanding of civil society's and governments' responsibility for the effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Bahá'í International Community and its affiliates in 182 countries, are striving to set a worldwide example of families which not only reject violence against the girl child, but also strive to provide a supportive and nurturing environment in which girls and women are valued and respected as equal partners.



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Statement submitted by American Psychological Association, Human Lactation Center, International Association for Women's Mental Health, International Association of Applied Psychology, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Council of Psychologists, International Council of Women, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of Social Workers, International Federation of Women Lawyers, International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, National Council of Women of the United States, Soroptimist International, World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation, World Council for Psychotherapy, World Federation for Mental Health and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

We, the international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and members of the NGO Committee on Mental Health, working under the auspices of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO) in Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, are committed to the promotion of mental health, psychological and societal well-being, the prevention and treatment of mental illness and emotional distress, and the improvement in the delivery and quality of mental health services through advocacy and education at the United Nations. Historically, mental health has been overlooked or minimized in discussions at the UN. The importance of maintaining full mental health for all people is recognized by the World Health Organization in its Constitution when it states that "health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity; the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition; and that the health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest cooperation of individuals and States."

The NGO Committee on Mental Health and its members have worked diligently to call attention to the importance of gender and mental health in our advocacy at the United Nations. Women and men of all ages have a basic human right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Fundamental to this goal is the implementation and vigorous enforcement of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and other binding human rights treaties, conventions and covenants. However, inadequate attention has been given to mental health in the follow-up and subsequent implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

Discrimination and violence are risk factors that can impact the girl child's overall well-being throughout her life span. Research demonstrates an association between childhood exposure to adverse events such as physical abuse and sexual violence, and higher rates of short- and long-term physical and emotional problems. Victimization in childhood places women more at risk for future victimization. Female survivors of violence and discrimination are especially vulnerable to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, alcohol and drug abuse and suicidal behavior throughout their life span. They are at increased risk of living in poverty, developing HIV/AIDS, being exploited in work situations, being isolated and having shorter life spans. Furthermore, survivors of violence and discrimination who suffer from emotional distress and mental illness are more likely to place their children at risk, jeopardizing safety, health, nutrition and education, all critical factors in healthy development.

Eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child is a critical component in improving quality of life for women of all ages. Such eradication will occur only if gender equality is valued and public policy is changed so that discrimination and violence are no longer seen as normative. Positive efforts will reduce the burden of mental distress in society and enhance women's ability to create healthy families, as well as participate fully in social and economic development. Girls' full capabilities can be developed and utilized only if their psychosocial well-being at home, in their community, and in their society is valued. Empowerment takes place when girls are supported in

the development of self-confidence and self-worth and when they are taught a range of healthy coping strategies. Violence against girls is a human rights abuse. Girls must be given basic human rights, rather than be treated as objects or property. They must have the opportunity to attain higher levels of education and career training.

Girls and women must be provided full access to mental and physical health care that addresses their gender-specific needs. Health and mental health professionals must understand the impact of discrimination and violence on women. Discriminatory practices, based on gender stereotypes, cultural traditions, and stigma, which restrict girls and women's access to appropriate and affordable mental health care must be eliminated.

Recommended Action Priorities:

- In its deliberations, the Commission on the Status of Women should recognize the psychological impact of all forms of discrimination and violence directed at the girl child. In order to recognize the significance of mental health in the lives of girls and women, as a general practice throughout the CSW documents and agreed conclusions, the specific words "physical and mental health" should be used in place of the general term "health";
- Governments, the UN system, NGOs, and the private sector should integrate mental health as a priority issue into all levels of policy and program development. The promotion of psychosocial well being and the improvement of mental health care for the girl child, as well as women of all ages, must be included within a broader range of concerns, such as the elimination of discrimination and violence, as well as health, post-conflict/disaster reconstruction, sustainable development, the eradication of poverty, and human rights;
- Early identification and intervention in childhood emotional and behavioral problems are critical steps in creating healthy individuals through the life span.
- Research should be supported and developed to better understand the impact that violence and discrimination play in the development of girls throughout their lives.
- Enhanced mental health education and training, which is gender sensitive in nature, should be given to primary health care workers, social service professionals, educators, clergy and other healers. These workers must become aware of the role of risk factors such as violence and discrimination in the development of some mental disorders and respond appropriately;
- Discrimination against girls and women in mental and physical health care must be eliminated and appropriate mental health care for girls and women throughout the life span should be available. All measures should be taken to diminish, if not eradicate, the stigma attached to girls and women with psychiatric disabilities and other psychological problems.



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Statement submitted by the European Women's Lobby, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) welcomes the fact that the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in its 51st session will review implementation of policies and actions taken to address the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. It also welcomes revision of the agreed conclusions reached at the 48th session¹ on the "Role of boys and men in achieving gender equality", as this is very relevant to the issue of achieving equality in the early stages of women's life cycle, namely in girlhood.

EWL firmly believes that equality between women and men begins with the girl child and recognition that the gender relations between girls and boys in the early stages of life is a precursor to gender equality in other phases of the life cycle. Girls and women of all ages are part of the same continuum; the difference for many girls and young women is their additional limited power to resist the constraints of gender inequality and correspondingly to negotiate the terms and conditions of gender equality in all areas of life.

EWL affirms that a proactive and systematic approach to gender equality in early childhood for both girls and boys, including the integration of a gender perspective in all policies related to children, is a prerequisite to eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

EWL has identified the following issues as critical in relation to the girl child in the European Union (EU), while recognising that they are also relevant and critical, some more so than others, in other areas of the world. Specific issues require urgent attention, namely, strong condemnation of all forms of male violence against the girl child in situations of conflict and war, and sanctions against those who in the role of the peacekeeper as part of the United Nations (UN) and EU peacekeeping mandates, engage in acts of violence against the girl child and women.

Education

EWL stresses that access to formal primary, secondary and third level education and the content of the curriculum as taught to girls and boys is a major influencing factor on gender differences and correspondingly on choices and access to rights. EWL points out that in the EU, while both girls and boys access to education in general may appear to be less problematic in comparison to other parts of the world, it should nevertheless be pointed out that girls and boys are not equal in accessing and fully availing of education systems and opportunities. In particular, access to girls from minorities, such as girls from the Roma community, asylum seekers, refugees and girls with disabilities remains highly problematic in some countries. The development of girl friendly school environments, education on gender awareness and encouraging girls to become leaders are essential to ensuring that the girl-child is central to formal education systems. Awareness raising and education of the girl child in relation to human rights instruments and capacity building to ensure full use of these are equally crucial.

Poverty and social exclusion

EWL draws attention to the impact of poverty and social exclusion on the girl child and young women, including in the European Union. In light of the persistent trend in the feminisation of poverty in the EU, the number of single parent households headed by women, the lack of political will to ensure payment of maintenance for girls – and boys – in situations

of separation and divorce, the weakening of public services and the impact on care, the demographic perspectives and access to education and training, EWL calls for systematic assessments on the impact of poverty/social exclusion on the girl child and to develop specific measures to address this in the context of Europeanⁱⁱ and United Nations policies, instruments and funding mechanisms on the rights of the child.

The impact of religious and customary practices on the girl child

EWL observes that a more conservative political climate over the past decade in Europe and globally has led to a growth in the influence of religion – all religions – in Europe. EWL recognises the threat religions play in refusing to question patriarchal cultures and in refusing to adopt positive measures in favour of the girl child and women. EWL's task is to continue to name, expose and condemn those practices that violate women's rights and silence women's voices wherever they may be. EWL refers to those areas in which cultural and religious practices and in some instances, legal practices, continue systematically to discriminate against women and the girl child either directly or indirectly.ⁱⁱⁱ In this context, EWL refers to practices that directly target the girl-child, justified and attributed to religious and/or cultural beliefs, such as female genital mutilation (FGM). The girl child is particularly vulnerable given that, on the basis of her young age and external influence, she is not in a position to negotiate and subsequently, access to and enjoyment of her human rights are being curtailed in absence of support and legal action.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

EWL is concerned that young women are facing the highest risk of HIV infection through heterosexual contact.^{iv} It is also concerned that practices that affect girls and young women's bodily integrity – such as FGM and forced sterilisation continue to persist. EWL calls for sexuality education, as opposed to simply sex education, as a means of accompanying girls and young women to guide them to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, particularly as they approach and reach adolescence. EWL also calls for unconditional free access to all girls and women, irrespective of their legal status, to information, counselling, health care, and methods of contraception and abortion services^v.

Male violence against girls

EWL is very concerned about the risk of violence against the girl child in the family, particularly in situations of child custody in relation to separation and/or divorce and where there is a history of partner violence/domestic violence. This is particularly worrisome in countries where automatic shared child custody is becoming a standard practice. EWL calls for strong legal protection of the girl child in these situations.

EWL also stresses that the way in which the image of girls is constructed in public space lowers her social value and promotes violence towards girls. EWL calls for strict and precise legislative norms to regulate the use of girl-child images in public space, including the consequences of breaking the norms.

EWL is particularly concerned with trafficking in girls and young women for the purpose of sexual exploitation, prostitution, pornography and all other activities run by the commercial

sex industry and/or by traffickers and pimps. Prostitution and the growth in the sex industry are symptoms of the unequal power relations between women and men. In a flourishing market-driven economy, men are taking the absolute right to buy the bodies of girls and young women – and boys – as commodities. While measures have been taken in the EU^{vi} to curb child sexual exploitation, failure to recognise the gendered dimension of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation will undermine further measures to address and eradicate this extreme form of girls and women's human rights violation.

Therefore, EWL calls on the UN and the EU to introduce and implement binding measures within their institutional mechanisms to ensure that violence against the girl child, young women and women is addressed as an issue of gender (in)equality.

Non accompanied minors as asylum seekers – issues for girls and young women

EWL also identifies the special needs of the girl child and young women as a non-accompanied asylum seeking minor, for whom no specific measures are taken at European level. While non-accompanied minors form a special category and are named as such in European asylum policies^{vii}, the girl child/young woman is not named as such and this is a matter of grave concern. EWL believes that while both asylum seeking non-accompanied girls and boys have special needs, the non-accompanied girl child/young woman is highly vulnerable. The traumatic experience of undertaking a dangerous journey, alone and separated from families and communities make her vulnerable to sexual exploitation and prey to sophisticated organised criminal organisations. The experience of girls and women in refugee camps shows that minimum protection does not guarantee their security. Indeed, sources from the UNHCR^{viii} testify to the vulnerability of women in refugee camp situations – in which they have presumably reached a zone of protection – they are coerced into providing sexual “favours” in return of food and other basic necessities. In the absence of specific measures for non-accompanied girls/young women asylum seekers, they are in fact at risk of finding themselves in these similar refugee-camp situations. EWL strongly condemns the detention of non-accompanied girls and boys and state that under no circumstances should they be detained for reasons of their immigration status.

ⁱ Commission on the Status of Women, Forty-eighth session, 1-12 March 2004, “The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, Agreed conclusions”, 12 March 2004, as adopted

ⁱⁱ Notably in the context of the Commission of the European Communities, “Communication from the Commission, Towards an EU strategy on the Rights of the Child”, Brussels 4.7.2006, COM(2006)367 final

ⁱⁱⁱ Religion and Women's Human Rights – EWL Position paper, May 2006

^{iv} See EuroHIV HIV/AIDS surveillance in Europe, End-year report 2005 No. 73

^v CEDAW General Recommendation art.12 1999 – as cited in EWL's position paper on Women's sexual rights in Europe, January 2005

^{vi} Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA of 22 December 2003 on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography; Council Decision 2000/375/JHA of 29 May 2000 to combat child pornography on the Internet

^{vii} Council Directive 2004/83/EC on *Minimum Standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted*; Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers (article 19)

^{viii} See: UNHCR “Sexual and gender-based violence against refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons – Guidelines for prevention and response”, May 2003



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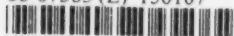
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Statement submitted by the New Japan Women's Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

Since its foundation in 1962, the New Japan Women's Association (NJA) has been working, among others, for the abolition of nuclear weapons, rights of women and children, and solidarity with women around the world for peace. As a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, NJA has attended UN sponsored World Conferences of Women and Sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women.

NJA joins many other women's organizations around the world in welcoming the report of the Secretary General's High-Level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment published on November 9, 2006, which recommended the establishment of an independent, stronger women's agency. The new women's entity will be headed by a newly created Under-Secretary-General with higher status, a substantially increased budget and additional staff for its work at global and country levels. NGOs have long pointed out that there is a tremendous gap between the promises made at the UN on women's rights, advancement and empowerment, and their implementation, which has resulted in no substantial changes in reality facing women on the ground. A consolidated women's entity to provide a stronger voice for women at global and local levels will be a big step forward in ensuring every woman on earth de facto equality and rights, not in name only. To make this reality, we call on all United Nations organizations and Member States to demonstrate a strong political will to promote the implementation of the Panel's recommendations.

The 51st Session of the Commission focuses on a thematic issue entitled "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child". The Beijing Platform for Action recognized that discrimination and violence against girls begin at the earliest stage of life and continue unabated throughout their lives. Given that this remains the reality of the girl child today, the full and effective implementation, with special attention directed to girls, of not only the Beijing Platform for Action and all the outcomes of its follow-up processes, but also of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, is essential.

We call on the government of Japan and all other Member States to make national action programs as early as possible based on sex disaggregated data on the girl child to address their specific needs. It is particularly important to provide human rights based sex education, both for girls and boys, with reproductive health and rights perspectives at home and school, to guarantee equal opportunities in and equal access to education at all levels, to promote educational and occupational choices free of gender based stereotypes, and to take all measures for eliminating from society as a whole stereotyped gender roles, and discriminatory or harmful traditional practices. In eliminating stereotyped gender roles and image, the media has a crucial role to play. To make all these possible, effective legislation and its enforcement, support services including child-focused budget, and awareness raising among the public and training of public officials and other stakeholders are called for.

NJWA draws attention to the fact that girls are most vulnerable to all forms of violence, particularly in armed conflict and war. Without peace, our efforts for eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child, as well as for empowering women from early stage of their life, will not bear fruit. In this connection, NJWA underscores the need for the concerted effort for eradicating conflict and war, and urges the United Nations and member states to commit themselves to implementing the Security Council 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and to resolving all disputes through peaceful diplomacy in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

NJWA reiterates its determination and willingness to continue working together with civil society, governments and international organizations including within the United Nations toward a common goal of "gender equality, peace and development".



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Statement submitted by Equality Now, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

In 1995, governments pledged in the Beijing Platform for Action to “revoke any remaining laws that discriminate on the basis of sex.” In 2000, the Outcome Document of the Special Session of the General Assembly convened to review the Platform for Action established a target date of 2005 for revocation of discriminatory laws. Two years later many discriminatory laws remain in force.

In 1999 and 2004, Equality Now published a representative sampling of explicitly discriminatory laws in force. As of December 2006, 21 of the 53 countries highlighted have repealed or amended the laws described - Bahamas, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, France, Guatemala, India, Jordan, Kuwait, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Republic of Korea, Serbia, Switzerland, Tonga, Turkey, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Such reforms set the example for moving from words to action. However, the majority of laws highlighted remain in force. See Words and Deeds—Holding Governments Accountable in the Beijing +10 Review Process (at www.equalitynow.org).

In 2005, the CSW adopted a resolution to consider the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women, sponsored by the governments of Rwanda and the Philippines and co-sponsored by 21 other countries. Such a Special Rapporteur could support and facilitate the elimination of legalized discrimination against women specified in the Beijing Platform for Action. A similar resolution was passed at the 50th session of the CSW sponsored by the governments of Rwanda and Slovenia, but this mechanism has yet to be created.

In his in-depth study on violence against women published in July 2006, the UN Secretary-General states that “[v]iolence against women is both a cause and a consequence of discrimination against women and of their inequality and subordination”. The report confirms that States’ obligations are concrete and clear and points out the limited implementation of these commitments. It states that “securing gender equality...must not be treated as [an] optional or marginal task” and concludes that “[a] stronger, more consistent and visible leadership role by intergovernmental bodies and the entities of the United Nations system is necessary”. It calls explicitly for States to “[r]emove all laws that discriminate against women; review and revise all State policies and practices to ensure that they do not discriminate against women; and ensure that provisions of multiple legal systems...comply with international human rights standards, including the principle of non-discrimination.”

Equality Now urges the CSW to show the leadership called for by the Secretary-General. Governments undertook in 1995 to eliminate discriminatory laws, and in 2000 set a target date of 2005 to fulfill this undertaking. Twelve years out and two years past the target date, women need to know that governments are taking their obligations seriously. On behalf of our coalition of international, regional, and national organizations in Bangladesh, Canada, Egypt, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Palestine, Peru, United Republic of Tanzania, and the United States of America, we urge you, following two years of discussion, to create a Special Rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women at this 51st session.



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Statement submitted by International Planned Parenthood Federation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.

Statement

Gender-Based Violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights

1. The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) welcomes the theme of the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women – “the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child”. Every girl and young woman irrespective of their race, religion, marital status, language, ethnicity, culture, disability or socioeconomic class or because they are indigenous people, migrants, including women migrant workers, displaced women or refugees has the right to equality, and to be free from all forms of discrimination including in their sexual and reproductive health and well being.
2. IPPF notes with increased concern the lack of global focus on the direct linkages between the inability of women and girls to negotiate and make decisions regarding their sexual lives, and their increased vulnerability to gender-based violence resulting in sexual and reproductive ill-health, unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortion, stigma and discrimination, etc.

“The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences” FWCW Platform for Action, 1995.

3. IPPF is the strongest voice safeguarding sexual and reproductive health and rights for people everywhere. We believe that the right to sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing is an essential component for the overall social and economic development of nations. This is particularly important when one considers that sexual and reproductive ill-health accounts for nearly one-fifth of the total global burden of disease.ⁱ IPPF’s work has demonstrated how lives can be transformed if girls, boys and women are empowered to act on their reproductive freedoms – a transformation for themselves, their families, their communities and the world.
4. It is over ten years since the landmark international conferences in Cairo and Beijing took place which affirmed universal access to sexual and reproductive health. The Beijing Platform for Action also recognizes the important role of sexuality and women’s capacity to control and make decisions as critical to their well being.
5. Both the Beijing agenda and the vision and commitments enshrined in the International Conference on Population and Development as well as both the Beijing and the Cairo Plus Five UN reviews emphasize that women must be at the very heart of international development. Both are committed to a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to addressing the critical issues facing women today. Both political platforms and agendas are mutually reinforcing in terms of the means, methods and outcomes of empowering women and ensuring that girls and women everywhere have the right to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

6. While there have been some advances in many parts of the world towards improving access to reproductive health technologies and services, there has been much less progress and too little attention focused on realizing the rights of women and girls to make key decisions regarding their sexual lives. The World Health Organization has identified unsafe sex as the second most important risk factor leading to disability or death in the poorest countries of the world. Indeed gender violence which is reported by between one-in-two and one-in-six women is a root cause of many sexual and reproductive health problemsⁱⁱ including: increased vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections, HIV and AIDS, unplanned pregnancy, abortion and reproductive cancers.
7. HIV and AIDS is globally recognized as an exceptional pandemic, however the role of gender based violence in increasing the vulnerability of girls and young women to HIV and AIDS is not sufficiently recognized. Today there are nearly 40 million people living with HIV: while women form nearly 50 per cent of this figure, over 60 per cent of all new infections are among young women aged 15-24 years. In some countries young women are six times more likely to be infected than males. This clearly reflects a catastrophic failure by the international community to address gender inequalities including violence that places young girls and women at greater risk of HIV infection.
8. Gender-based violence is one of the greatest forms of discrimination against women and is a major public health concern in its own right. The Report of the Secretary General on "In-depth study on all forms of violence against women" notes four forms of violence that also adversely affect girls and young women. They include violence against women within the family, such as partner violence, harmful traditional practices (i.e. female genital mutilation, child marriage and prenatal sex selection) violence against women in the wider community, particularly sexual violence, sexual harassment and trafficking. Other related forms of violence include those perpetrated or condoned by the state, and violence against women in armed conflict.ⁱⁱⁱ The World Health Organization study on violence against women notes the alarming rates of forced sex in many countries and draws attention to the difficulty women face in protecting themselves against HIV infection.^{iv}
9. This UN gathering is a unique political opportunity for the global community to reaffirm the commitments enshrined in the Beijing Platform for Action. It is also an opportunity to address the gap between the rhetoric of the numerous commitments made to eradicate gender based violence by the international community and the reality facing women and girls around the world on a daily basis. It also presents an opportunity for Member State governments to reaffirm the right of women and girls to exercise their fundamental right to sexual and reproductive health and rights without fear or coercion.
10. As was noted by the Commission on the Status of Women Report on the forty-fifth session (6-16 March and 9-11 May 2001), "many women face additional barriers to the enjoyment of their human rights because of such factors as their race, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability or socioeconomic class or because they are indigenous people, migrants, including women migrant workers, displaced women or refugees. Also the outcome documents of the special

session of the General Assembly indicate that in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation, human rights of women have been extensively violated”.

11. The elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including those such as rape, trafficking and harmful traditional practices requires urgent action from governments. The duty to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of girls and women places an obligation on all States to ensure the introduction of appropriate legislative, judicial, administrative, budgetary, economic and other related programmes and services to enable them to effectively exercise these rights.

Recommendations

1. We welcome the focus on the need to end discrimination against girls and women by the fifty-first session of the CSW. We urge the international community to both reaffirm and fully recognize the pivotal role played by women in solving the world's most pressing problems. We acknowledge that realizing the rights of girls and women means fulfilling all promises and commitments that have been made over the past decade. And if promises by the international community are to be treated seriously by future generations, then all such promises and commitments need to be kept by the governments of today.
2. IPPF is willing to play its role. To achieve this goal the appropriate political will, resources and environment are required to enable us all to increase efforts to collectively empower girls and women to have the ability and opportunities to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights.
3. If the Beijing goals are to be met – alongside the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Millennium Development Goals - then political and programmatic efforts must be scaled up at all levels. Adequate resources will also need to be found and allocated. In addition, we must work together to devise new approaches to closing the gender gap in areas such as health, education and human rights – including sexual and reproductive rights.
4. With the new target noted by the General Assembly for ‘universal access to reproductive health by 2015’ in the Millennium Development Goals, we urge governments, the United Nations entities and relevant bodies to ensure that the necessary measures are put in place to protect girls and young women from all forms of discrimination and violence and a reduction in the increasingly high number of women, especially young women, who are infected by HIV.
5. IPPF urges that more commitment be made by the international community to protect the wellbeing of girls and women and that global attention be focused on these key linkages. The message from activists around the world is clear: “In the face of brutality and staggering death rates, these linked crises require immediate and dramatic attention - from creating or strengthening policy, to changing attitudes and challenging prejudices”.^v

6. Finally IPPF urges governments to enforce legislation and expand existing legislation to fully protect the rights of all girls and women including their rights to sexual and reproductive health, to be free from all forms of gender-based violence, and for governments to design programmes that are specifically tailored to the needs of girls and women.

ⁱ FACT Sheet 31: How Access to Sexual & Reproductive Health Services is Key to the MDGs, Washington, 2005.

ⁱⁱ Glasier, A et al, 2006 "Sexual and reproductive health: a matter of life and death" in the Lancet: Sexual and Reproductive Health, October 2006.

ⁱⁱⁱ UN General Assembly: 2006, In-depth study on all forms of violence against women: Report of the Secretary General: sixty-first session.

^{iv} World Health Organisation, 2005, WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women: summary report of initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses. Geneva, World.

^v Rothschild, C., Reilly, A. and Nordstrom, A., 2006, "Strengthening resistance: confronting violence against women and HIV/AIDS", Centre for Women's Global Leadership.



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Statement submitted by International Council of Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

Trafficking has a substantial history, and its beginnings can be traced to the system of slavery which was endemic to various cultures and societies throughout the world. It is a practice which is still well and alive, and with the vast improvements in technology and increasingly fluid movement of human resources, goods and services across borders, traffickers are finding it faster and easier to ply their trade.

Trafficking is essentially based on poverty and exploitation, and traffickers focus on the most vulnerable groups in society. Needless to say, women and children are the primary targets. Children are trafficked for a multitude of reasons: for recruitment as child soldiers, as lowly or unpaid labour or as sex workers, or to have their organs harvested. Gender inequalities only aggravate the situation for the girl child, who can be subject to a child marriage, female genital mutilation and sexual violence. The high demand of the sex industry for the girl child only bodes ill for her, and UNICEF reports that among the high numbers of children trafficked in West and Central Africa (mainly for domestic work), nearly 90% of them are girls.ⁱ Further away in Asia, girls as young as 13 years of age find themselves trafficked as 'mail-order brides'.ⁱⁱ While Asia and Africa have been acknowledged as a common source of human trafficking, Eastern Europe is rapidly rivalling these regions in the numbers of women and children trafficked, due to the porous borders resulting from the fall of Communism.ⁱⁱⁱ

The ICW-CIF's theme for 2003-2006 was 'Women in Development: Water, Poverty and the Girl Child'. The ICW-CIF recognises that gender equality is essentially premised on attaining the most basic human rights, and protection of the girl child is but one of the means through which child protection as a whole and gender equality can be achieved. The ICW-CIF has long recognised trafficking as a grave problem, and since its inception in 1888, trafficking has occupied a prime position on the ICW-CIF agenda. As early as the first decade of the 20th century, resolutions were adopted to curb white slavery (1904), suppress trafficking in women (1909) and protect young girls in cross-border transit (1911). Subsequently, resolutions for the protection of children during hostilities (1979). More recently in 2003 and 2006, the ICW-CIF adopted resolutions on the prevention of trafficking in women and children, and transnational organised crime.

It is telling that up until as recently as 2005, international law did not have a clear definition of what constituted 'trafficking', and it was at times confused with people smuggling.^{iv} It was only in 2000 that the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons was added to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, especially Women and Children. Article 2 of the Protocol contained a definition of 'trafficking', which detailed the abuse of power and the exploitation which lay at the root of the trade.

ICW-CIF welcomed the addition of the Protocol to the Convention, and has been doing its utmost to support the Convention and Protocol through a variety of means, namely:

- 1) educating members of the legal sector, civil society and National Councils of Women on the Convention and Protocol
- 2) monitoring the implementation of UN standards and norms

- 3) Collecting data on and analysing best practices in preventing and fighting trafficking in the girl child
- 4) Providing victims of trafficking with assistance
- 5) Taking measures to discourage factors which create an environment for the exploitation of the girl child
- 6) Monitoring the signature and ratification of the Convention and Protocol
- 7) Ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention and Protocol

While the Convention and Protocol lay out the legal framework to combat trafficking in children, it must be borne in mind that the battle against child trafficking is a complex one which must be fought on many fronts. Providing children with adequate nutrition, resources and education are but a few of the steps which need to be taken. Education of states, communities, children and families is crucial to ensure that all parties involved are aware of the challenges facing them. The consequences of child trafficking are severe and far-reaching. If a society is to be judged on the basis of the human rights enjoyed by its members, then the rights its children enjoy, which require even more vigilance, are the ultimate test of a society's soundness.

The ICW-CIF lauds the fact that the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) has made the theme of this 51st session 'The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child', in recognition of the fact that protecting our children is a fundamental part of the struggle for human rights. The CSW is firmly committed to the goals mapped out at the 1990 World Summit for Children and in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. In 1998, it took on wide-ranging recommendations aimed at improving the lot of the girl child. However, while recognising that the girl child is certainly in need of protection, one should also realise that raising awareness about the vulnerability of the girl child is not merely a bid to shelter her from the many evils surrounding her, but just as importantly, to educate and empower the girl child herself, so that she may hold her head high and walk forth to take her place at the forefront of society.

ⁱ 'Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation', UNICEF.

http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_exploitation.html

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ 'Trafficking in Persons: the new Protocol', *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* The figures were revealed in a 1999 study by the International Organization for Migration.

^{iv} Susan Glazebrook, 'Looking Outwards', 8th Annual Ethel Benjamin Commemorative Address, Dunedin, 5 April 2004.



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Statement submitted by World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

The World Alliance of YMCAs is a youth organisation with 45 million members worldwide, of whom half are girls and women. YMCAs are working in 124 countries and are advocating for and promoting the rights of the girl child.

Committed to empowering all, especially young people and the most vulnerable, the World Alliance of YMCAs is deeply concerned about the widespread forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

Committed to work in solidarity with the poor, dispossessed and oppressed, the World Alliance of YMCAs is particularly concerned about the plight of girls from marginalised communities, for example girls from indigenous and tribal communities, Dalit girls, girls living in poverty and refugees and immigrants. Millions of girls face double discrimination and increased risk of violence because of their marginalised status and their gender. Girls from marginalised communities are much more likely to suffer violence in all its forms, be denied access to education, economic independence and decision making, suffer from ill health, malnutrition, early death, early marriages and sexual abuse.

As a result of its work with marginalised communities around the world, the YMCA calls for state-parties and civil society to take urgent action to ensure that:

- Policies and strategies are designed and implemented to support girls to become aware of their rights and are empowered to overcome the culture of silence when their rights are denied and there is violence against them. Girls are supported to collectively raise their voices against all injustices done to them and to combat patriarchy in all its forms. That a special focus is given to girls from marginalised communities.
- Policies and strategies are designed and implemented for boys to become aware of the deep-rooted patriarchal systems of oppression, discrimination and violence against girls and women and are engaged to strive for equal relations between girls and boys, women and men.
- Governments ensure that structural systems promoting discrimination and violence against the girl child are dismantled; that schemes for the empowerment of the girl child are established such as free education and income generation programmes for parents in impoverished communities; that a clear national gender policy with special focus on the girl child is developed and implemented; that all who oppress the girl child are prosecuted. In all these efforts there should be a special focus on overcoming the double discrimination and increased risk of violence faced by girls from marginalised communities.
- The international community monitors the enforcement of the various conventions, protocols and legal systems in place to protect the rights of the girl child, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with a particular focus on assisting girls from marginalised communities.

The YMCA is mobilising both girls and boys, women and men, at local, national and international levels to address these issues and welcomes further efforts to develop practical strategies and tools for a lasting end to discrimination and violence against the girl child.



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Statement submitted by AARP, Altrusa International, Armenian International Women's Association, Associated Country Women of the World, Baha'i International Community, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, International Association of Women in Radio and Television, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres, International Federation of University Women, International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, International Federation of Women Lawyers, National Council of Women of the United States, Pan Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association, Soroptimist International, Trickle up Program, United Nations Association of the United States of America, United States Committee for UNIFEM, Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, World Union for Progressive Judaism and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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Statement

We, the undersigned international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, all members of the NGO Committee on UNIFEM, direct your attention to the outstanding leadership of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) as it celebrates the thirtieth anniversary of its important work to foster women's empowerment and gender equality.

UNIFEM focuses its activities on four strategic areas:

- ☐ Reducing feminized poverty
- ☐ Ending violence against women
- ☐ Reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls
- ☐ Achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war

In each of these areas UNIFEM's catalytic work has contributed substantially to the priority theme of this year's CSW, "the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child".

UNIFEM works with women in over 100 countries at the community level where discrimination and violence against the girl child begin in families even before birth, with prenatal sex selection and female infanticide, and can continue throughout their lives. In many parts of the world girls are married while they are still children, a situation which often curtails their education, limits access to health care and family planning, makes them economically and socially dependent, leaves them vulnerable to violence, and deprives them of opportunities for self-fulfillment.

UNIFEM aims to redress and address the gender inequalities and discrimination of women and girls through a rights based approach to all its work. The underpinning in UNIFEM's approach to each of its strategic focus areas is to strengthen institutions for the protection and promotion of rights and participation.

UNIFEM has assisted women throughout the world to use their country's periodic reports to the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW, to report violations of their country's commitments to women's equal rights. UNIFEM has also worked with women's advocates to change national constitutions, create new laws, improve the judicial system and create new policies to conform to their CEDAW treaty obligations regarding the rights of women and girls.

UNIFEM, in partnership with several NGOs, was in the forefront of advocacy for the adoption of the landmark Security Council resolution #1325 on women, peace and security. This resolution recognizes the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, calls for the full implementation of humanitarian human rights laws to protect women and girls during and after conflict, directs attention to the special needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations, singles out protection against gender-based violence, especially rape, and requests

that the Secretary General conduct a study including data on women and girls in armed conflict. UNIFEM has been monitoring the implementation of this resolution in conflict areas around the world and provides updates on specific country situations on its Women, War and Peace Web Portal.

UNIFEM will celebrate its tenth year as manager of the UN General Assembly Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women in 2007. Trust Fund grants support small innovative projects that impact laws, policies and attitudes that reduce violence against women at local, national and regional levels. Since 1997 the Trust Fund has made grants of \$10 million US dollars to 198 projects in 100 countries, but there are many more applications than the Fund can support. As part of the founding resolution of the Trust Fund, UNIFEM reports regularly to the General Assembly on activities to eliminate violence against women and girls.

UNIFEM's approach to the HIV/AIDS pandemic emphasizes the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV/AIDS infection due to their continued low status in societies. Its programs for the past seven years have focused on eradicating gender inequalities and empowering women and girls, including the role men and boys can play in changing attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality. Most recently, UNIFEM supports the "Three Ones" principles to transform national response to AIDS through more effective use of resources and results-based management.

Throughout its thirty years, UNIFEM's leadership in promoting rights for women and girls has created opportunities for substantial change in their social, economic and political lives. UNIFEM will continue to address the difficult and multi-faceted discriminations that women and girls around the world face every day working with many partners at all levels to affect positive change. We wholeheartedly endorse their efforts.



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Statement submitted by National Alliance of Women's Organizations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

The theme of this, the 51st meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, is of profound importance, focusing as it does on the girl child: our next generations. NAWO applauds all those involved in the process of bringing this vital issue to the attention of UN agencies and States Parties through this CSW.

The National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO) represents a significant network of women's organisations and individuals headquartered in England. With a special focus on gender and Europe, NAWO seeks an end to gender inequality and advocates on behalf of its members for the establishment of social justice based on internationally agreed human rights instruments for all women. NAWO works closely with sister organisations in the United Kingdom and with the European Women's Lobby.

NAWO is particularly concerned to highlight the trafficking of girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation which constitutes a heinous modern day form of slavery and urges those present at CSW to address this matter urgently.

Gender equality cannot be achieved until all forms of violence, which occurs at all stages of a woman's life cycle from conception to death, are fully addressed. Most forms of violence against women are first perpetuated against the girl child beginning in the womb in the form of selected birth abortion to the female genital mutilation of girls as young as three or four months old, to sexual abuse in the form of rape and incest, to the trafficking of young girls as young as five or six for the purposes of sexual exploitation, to early forced marriage in adolescence.

Specifically, NAWO would like to call attention for the need to address more fully the demand-side of trafficking of young girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Demand for young girls is often generated and perpetuated by media stereo-types that portray young girls as sexual commodities to be consumed. In particular, the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to both traffic actual girls, i.e. advertising which girls are available, and to traffic pornographic images of girls without their consent, is an area that has been overlooked and needs to be urgently addressed.ⁱ

As one recent report notes, "...traffickers and others use ICTs to shape public norms about women in ways that make trafficking and sexual exploitation more acceptable. Representations of women in pornography, sex tourism and marriage sites and in other online ads, all work to compound acceptance of violence against women."ⁱⁱ

NAWO calls on the United Nations system in and through all its bodies and agencies and on States Parties, in particular those from the ECE region, to conduct research on how ICTs are currently being used to facilitate and normalise the exploitation of girls as well to as explore how ICTs can be used to promote positive transformation of gender roles. One area of research should be focused on the abuse of ICTs.

At this CSW where the role of men and boys in achieving equality is being reviewed, it is imperative that the demand side of trafficking is fully explored and mechanisms set in place to stop impunity for perpetrators.

Education is a powerful tool for empowerment and thus can be used to promote positive gender roles as a way of minimising the demand for trafficked girls. Boys need to be educated from an early age regarding the value and dignity of girls and women rather than encouraging the notion that they are objects to be exploited. Pedagogical models that promote the value and worth of girls so they are never more seen as commodities to be bought and sold, need to be encouraged, developed and implemented.

Media as a method of communication, education and cultural exchange is currently one of the most powerful influences in society. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the debate on the role of the media to stop violence and discrimination against girls is continued with growing momentum at this CSW. In addition resources need to be provided such that the media begins to promote most actively, across borders and boundaries, a positive image of girls and women as controllers of their own destiny, whose contribution to society enables the world to be a better place; and without whose contribution the world and its peoples cannot attain the prosperity and happiness they could so easily achieve.

¹ Karen Maltzahn, "Digital Dangers: Information and Communication Technology and Trafficking in Women, Association for Progressive Communication, <http://www.genderit.org/upload/ad6215b74e2a861>

² Ibid, pp. 7-8



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Statement submitted by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) looks forward to the 51st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the opportunity it presents to further the work of Member States towards women's empowerment, human rights and gender equality. WILPF once again expresses its full and unequivocal support for the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and the outcomes of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly. In the years since its inception in 1915, WILPF has continually worked to prevent armed conflicts and to establish the conditions for sustainable peace on a global scale. Without gender equality, sustainable peace, sustainable development and true human security is unattainable. In its work to achieve these ends, WILPF has participated in all of the United Nations World Conferences on Women and sessions of the CSW. It remains committed to working to ensure that in these fora and others, there is continued work done on ensuring that the struggle for women's human rights, security and empowerment in all spheres goes beyond policy and is translated into reality through a process in which women are fully and effectively included.

In its development of policy in relation to eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child and its evaluation of prior commitments in relation to the role of men and boys, the Commission once again has the opportunity to translate words into actions.

WILPF looks forward to the Commission's consideration of the theme of the "elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child." In this regard, we look forward to Member State's critically identifying gaps and challenges in implementation so as to develop policy which will allow more rapid and effective progress.

While discrimination and violence against the girl child is present world-wide and in times of peace, some of its most devastating examples and effects are seen in armed-conflict. The impact on girls of armed conflict is particularly severe. Not only are they particularly vulnerable as children, but their being girl children mean that this impact is compounded. That they are differently affected and have specific needs and interest and require specific protection is recognized in several Security Council Resolutions – resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and resolutions 1261, 1314, 1379, 1460, 1539 and 1612 – all dealing with specific issues regarding children in armed conflict. International and humanitarian law provides protection for girls against harm and abuse during armed conflict and particular protections are found in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

WILPF calls on all Member States to respect this international law and more broadly to commit to the goals and objectives that they seek to further. WILPF urges governments to implement the recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting held by the Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with UNICEF on "The girl child and armed conflict: Recognizing and addressing grave violations of girls' human rights."

In particular, WILPF urges the UN system and Member States to address sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeeping personnel, including through effective pre-deployment training of

personnel and through the establishment and enforcement of accountability mechanisms. More broadly, and on the national level, WILPF urges governments to ensure that their national legislation conforms to international norms and standards regarding the rights of women and girls and prohibitions against violence against them; that monitoring and accountability mechanisms in relation to such violence are established and fully and effectively funded; and that national judicial systems and health care and other services are functional and accessible and attend to the needs of girls affected by conflict.

WILPF also urges governments to recognize and change the attitudes and behaviors that cause and perpetuate the gender inequality in society in which such discrimination and violence is rooted. Education plays a key role in this and governments have, through their commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, committed, at the very least to the goal of universal primary education for all children – including girls. Access to quality education for girls is essential for their empowerment.

WILPF calls on Member States to actively pursue and properly fund programs to promote access to education for girls but, in addition, to educate all in society, including men and boys, about gender and about gender discrimination, its causes and consequences and to seek to include all in bringing about its elimination. The necessity of including all members of society in the elimination of discrimination provides the crucial link with the other theme considered by the Commission in its 51st Session.

In this regard WILPF welcomes the evaluation by the Commission of progress in the implementation of the previously agreed conclusions on the theme of the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality. WILPF recognizes that discrimination against women is not a problem which can be addressed through the empowerment of women alone. Gender and sex discrimination is rooted in patriarchy which defines and controls the roles of both men and women and both boys and girls. Men and boys too are constrained by these roles and the achievement of gender equality is of benefit to society as a whole, including for men and boys. It is necessary to critically examine all of these roles, to examine masculinities and femininities and, furthermore, to see that without a shift in the norms and beliefs of society as a whole in this regard, the implementation of the BPFA, the Millennium Development Goals and other commitments is impossible and true gender equality unattainable. The contribution of men and boys in this cannot be undervalued. WILPF looks forward to Member States' evaluation of their prior commitments with a view to furthering their practical implementation.

Just as the role of men and boys is critical in achieving gender equality, so too is it necessary to recognize that the elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child cannot stand separate from the elimination of such discrimination and violence against women. And such cannot stand separate from the empowerment of women. Their empowerment and the realization of their role as equal decision makers in society makes it more likely that decisions will be made that take the needs and interest of girls into account. In addition, girls will be further empowered through the provision of role models to which they can aspire.

The UN system too needs to provide positive examples and more effective frameworks and mechanisms by which to pursue the larger project of achieving gender equality and the empowerment

of women – of which the themes considered by the Commission are but one part. In this regard the UN system needs to set a positive example and to provide effective frameworks and mechanisms to pursue this work. WILPF reiterates the call made by NGOs at previous sessions of the Commission and to and by the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence to more effectively pursue gender mainstreaming and to seriously upgrade and better resource the gender equality architecture of the United Nations.

In all of these issues, in order to develop more effective and responsive policies and progress, it is necessary that there be better documentation, monitoring and reporting. This is not possible without the provision of sex-disaggregated data. WILPF calls on Member States to support the development of statistical collection that is disaggregated in this manner and all Member States and the UN system itself to provide the technical and financial support to make this possible. Failure to do so indicates a lack of commitment to making a meaningful effort and to dedicating real resources to achieving gender equality. Achieving gender equality requires action. Action is unlikely to be effective if it is not based on the reality revealed by data and facts.

WILPF continues to support and work towards making gender equality a reality and to ensuring collective human security and sustainable peace. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with all stakeholders to create a culture of peace and a world in which all, including girl children, are free from violence and all forms of oppression.



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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

Statement submitted by World Vision International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



Statement

World Vision International welcomes the 2007 Commission on the Status of Women's (CSW) focus on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

Over the last 10 years, 189 countries have adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with strong recommendations to improve the status of the girl child. The Millennium Development Goals have again focused the world's attention on the girl child and the necessity of gender equity for the alleviation of poverty. Yet today, while the international community has seen great progress, governments are still struggling to fulfil their commitments. More must be done to protect girls from the countless acts of injustice they suffer and to provide an environment in which they will thrive.

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian values, World Vision is dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. We serve all people regardless of religion, race ethnicity or gender.

World Vision works within nearly 100 nations realising that gender equity is not only key to the prevention of discrimination and violence, but also essential for sustainable development, peace and the achievement of healthy and just relationships. As a child focused organization, we prioritise the poorest and most vulnerable children and empower them and their families and communities to improve child survival, development, protection and participation.

World Vision works alongside communities to challenge harmful traditional practices that hurt girls, to foster respect and value for girls, and to empower girls to be active participants of their own development and become leaders of their communities.

For the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child, World Vision calls upon the CSW Member States to uphold children's rights through educating girls and preventing violence.

Uphold children's rights

The principle of non-discrimination and the right to protection from abuse and exploitation are some of the cornerstones of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and yet the abuse and discrimination of girls too often go unnoticed and unpunished. In order to protect the rights of girls, states must uphold the CRC, gender inequity must be addressed, and all people sensitised to children's and women's rights.

World Vision recommends that governments:

1. Work with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to commit to adequately recording social statistical data by disaggregating records of women and girls, men and boys, and create indicators and monitoring systems to track the status of the girl child.
2. Enforce the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its two Optional Protocols, with funding and accountability mechanisms, and enhance the

political will needed to do so, as governments are legally bound by the conventions. Ensure that all citizens understand the provisions of the conventions and other laws for the protection of human rights, and the importance of the prevention of violence and abuse to protect vulnerable girls and women. This can be achieved through school curricula and through educating all children, parents, teachers, welfare and law enforcement officers on children's rights and human rights.

3. Reduce child labour and ensure completion of primary and secondary education by empowering parents, especially mothers, with income-generating skills and by providing them with loans for small businesses and market access for their products.
4. Enhance health care delivery in rural areas by providing additional health care facilities, increased medical personnel (including traditional birth attendants), and increased access to medication, including anti-retroviral drugs, and work together with civil society to reduce the stigma and discrimination that surround people affected by HIV and AIDS.
5. Support the formation of community-based abuse prevention activities, including the formation of child protection committees, mentoring programmes, provision of day care centres for children of working parents, and psychological, legal and social support to families and orphaned children. Work with parents to promote a rights-based approach to parenting and gender equality, and support them in learning new parenting skills, including non-violent forms of discipline that will enable their girl children to develop self-confidence and the will to achieve.
6. Engage men and boys to create gender parity: encourage them to contribute to the work of household chores and to challenge violence and gender roles and traditions that are unjust and harmful.

Educate girls

High illiteracy rates among women and lower school attendance rates among girls, especially at the secondary level, constitute discrimination against the girl child. Unreasonable workloads in the home, preferences for sons, a disregard for the rights of girls, early marriage, child labour, poverty, and the threat of violence keep too many girls from completing their education and trap them and their families in cycles of poverty.

World Vision and the international community acknowledge that the education of girls is one of the most effective methods for the development of a nation and the eradication of poverty, and that educating girls also protects them from discrimination and violence.

To this end, World Vision recommends that governments:

7. Prioritise girls' education through committing a significant portion of the national budget to ensure free, compulsory and quality inclusive education for all (including children with disabilities). Incentives like school feeding programmes, providing uniforms and books, career education, and boarding facilities and scholarships for higher education motivate and ensure high retention and completion rates.

8. Improve the quality of education. Reform curricula to better engage girl children and eliminate gender-biased language; apply innovative teaching methods and learning materials that encourage boys and girls to challenge harmful traditional roles and adopt equitable relationships; raise awareness of children's rights; prepare girls for the workplace; and provide incentives to attract and maintain quality teachers, especially in rural areas.
9. Ensure that reproductive health and sex education are taught in the classroom and encourage values-based decision making. Challenge harmful and risky behaviour, and empower children and youth to avoid unwanted sex, with the prevention of HIV and sexually transmitted infections as a central tenet.
10. Ensure girls who are orphaned, married girls, pregnant girls and teenage mothers stay in traditional school programmes. Develop training courses for teachers to understand girls' needs. Provide specialised educational programmes and materials of good quality that incorporate life skills including literacy, numeracy, health and income-generating skills for children with disabilities, institutionalised children, girls who have previously dropped out of school, and girls in especially difficult circumstances. Incorporate recreation time and flexible school schedules so youth may continue their education and transform the lives of their daughters, families, selves and society.

Prevent violence

The majority of the world's women and girls will experience violence; whether it's physical, psychological or sexual violence, it plagues every community and many homes. Violence damages health, can prevent education and economic ability, and can forever scar the girl's spiritual, psychological and emotional well-being. States must take extraordinary action to protect their most vulnerable citizens: girl children.

To this end, World Vision recommends that governments:

11. Prevent all forms of child abuse, through community-based education and sensitisation. Educate men and boys especially on their roles in preventing violence against the girl child and the rights of the girl child to be free of sexual exploitation; educate girls on their rights and empower them to recognise and even prevent abuse and unwanted sex.
12. Sensitise individuals, communities and law protection forces to understand, recognise and protect women and girls who are trafficked and forced into prostitution; create and fund multinational and regional coalitions to stop human trafficking, prevent child sex tourism, and identify and prosecute traffickers and abusers of women and children.
13. Provide care centres, in partnership with NGOs, for counselling and restoring girls and women who are victims of violence, sexual exploitation, and abuse, and empower these girls and women through job skills training.

14. Fund and enforce the strict implementation of national policies on violence and discrimination against women and girl children and incorporate follow-up actions to the 2006 UN Secretary-General's study on Violence against Children and the 2006 UN Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women.

World Vision acknowledges the significant challenge of citizens to hold governments accountable. Therefore, we call on all CSW Member States to take seriously their previous commitments to girls' rights, women's rights and human rights. We urge governments to put mechanisms in place to enforce the implementation of their own commitments, to put power behind the treaties and agreements they endorse and sign. Furthermore, World Vision suggests partnership with social institutions and civil society – such as churches, councils of elders, women's and men's organisations, educators, children's clubs, community leaders and parents – to ensure the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.